SINCLAIR LEWIS'S PHYSICIANS AND
CLERGYMEN: SATIRE IN
CHARACTERIZATION

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**CONTENTS**

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1

II. PHYSICIANS ........................................... 6

III. CLERGYMEN ........................................... 31

IV. CONCLUSION ........................................... 51

   BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................... 57
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The reputation of Sinclair Lewis as a novelist has fluctuated with the years—and with the critics. The first American to win the Nobel Prize for literature and one of the most spectacularly popular American novelists of the early twentieth century, Lewis saw his Main Street, translated into several languages, sell a million copies. He saw Babbitt become a household word. He published twenty-two novels and more than one hundred short stories. Yet Lewis Mumford expresses the thoughts of many when he says,

The sum total of America, as presented in the pages of Mr. Lewis, is less than that which a true poet, like Mr. Robinson Jeffers or Mr. Robert Frost, will indicate in a single page.1

T. K. Whipple speaks of "several peculiarities and limitations all of which point to a poverty of invention or imagination,"2 limitations he lists as "his superficiality, his meretricious writing, his lack of passion and of thoughtfulness,"3 and


3Whipple, "Lewis," p. 82.
calls Lewis "significant mainly as a social rather than as a literary phenomenon."{4}

This paradoxical situation reveals itself in all aspects of Lewis's writing. Sherwood Anderson wrote, in 1922,

> The texture of the prose written by Mr. Lewis gives me but faint joy and I cannot escape the conviction that for some reason Lewis has himself found but little joy, either in life among us or in his own effort to channel his reactions to our life into prose. {5}

About the same time, however, H. L. Mencken was saying of Main Street, "I have read no more genuinely amusing novel for a long while,"{6} and of the next novel, "As I say, this Babbitt gives me great delight" with its scenes wherein "there is more than mere humor; there is searching truth."{7}

Conflicting opinions can be also found in discussions of his sincerity, his profundity, his attitude toward America's middle-class, his descriptive powers, his characterizations, and his use of satire. It is with these last two facets that this paper will deal. The purpose of this thesis is to study Lewis's characterization of two groups of professional men--medical doctors and clergymen--and particularly the use of satire in these characterizations. Characters from five novels

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{4}Whipple, "Lewis," p. 82.


{7}Mencken, "Consolation," p. 19.
will be considered—four from the 'twenties, Lewis's period of greatest achievement, and one from the 'forties, the closing years of his life. The novels are *Main Street* (1920), *Babbitt* (1922), *Arrowsmith* (1925), *Elmer Gantry* (1927), and *Kingsblood Royal* (1947). In each chapter, the characters will be considered chronologically by the date of publication of the novel in which each appears.

Before attempting to study some of Lewis's physicians and ministers as they are presented satirically, one must decide just what satire is. *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* defines it as the use of "trenchant wit, irony, or sarcasm for the purpose of exposing and discrediting vice or folly." Several books have been written about the art of satire, with examples of satirical writing from the time of the Romans to the present, ranging from the formality of Horace to the lightness of Al Capp's "Lil Abner," and from the bitterness of Jonathan Swift to the good-naturedness of Addison and Steele. What, then, with such a vast range in time, style, and tone, can be said of satire; what limits can be set?

It seems that one ingredient common to all satire is criticism—criticism designed to strip away false fronts. The satirist seems always to be abnormally aware of the vast difference between what is and what could be. The satirist comprehends this difference much more fully than does the ordinary person, and because of this sensitivity, he finds himself unable to tolerate the existing state of affairs without
some sort of protest. The protest of the satirist is a conscious attempt to wake his readers to the same awareness he possesses, to make them face the same uncomfortable facts he sees. As Sutherland says,

You cannot be a satirist just by telling the truth; you are a satirist when you consciously compel men to look at what they have tried to ignore, when you wish to destroy their illusions or pretences, when you deliberately tear off the disguises and expose the naked truth.

What has been said of satire so far, however, is equally true of some other types of writing, particularly of the didactic. Other distinctions, therefore, must be considered in this attempt to isolate satire. Satire differs from the purely didactic primarily in tone or mood; although satire is not always comic in the traditional sense, it does always make use of laughter. Hightet says that the satirist feels an emotion which is

...a blend of amusement and contempt. In some satirists, the amusement far outweighs the contempt. In others it almost disappears; it changes into a sour sneer, or a grim smile, or a wry awareness that life cannot all be called reasonable or noble. ...Even if the contempt which the satirist feels may grow into furious hatred, he will still express his hatred in terms suitable, not to murderous hostility, but to scorn. Hate alone may be expressed in other kinds of literature; and so may laughter, or the smile of derision. The satirist aims at combining them.

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These, then, seem to be the essentials of satire—a critical attitude, the intention of forcing the reader to recognize the existence of the human shortcoming being criticized, and an element of laughter.

The devices utilized in satire are numerous; Hight discussses twenty or more. Worcester, in his The Art of Satire, says that the "spectrum-analysis of satire runs from the red of invective at one end to the violet of the most delicate irony at the other." But whatever the devices used, whatever the degree of crudeness or subtlety, satire remains more a spirit, a quality, than a definite literary form.

CHAPTER II
PHYSICIANS

Two of Lewis's most carefully delineated characters—and at least a half dozen of his skillfully sketched minor ones—are medical doctors. Chance may account for this rather disproportionately large number of physicians in the world he peoples, but a perhaps more plausible explanation is the fact that his father was a doctor. According to Lewis Untermeyer, Lewis idolized his father; Mark Schorer feels that the son's feeling for his father was one more marked by a combination of dislike and unwilling admiration than by idolization. Certainly, however, Lewis was familiar with the life of a small-town physician. Thus it seems only natural that, in searching for characters, he would have found the doctor a likely candidate. Whatever the reason, Lewis has portrayed several medical men memorably.

Will Kennicott, the Main Street physician from Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, is one of the most vividly sketched of Lewis's characters. It is largely with him, rather than with Carol, that the reader's sympathies rest. And because Kennicott becomes a real person in the course of the novel, one is able to establish a certain kinship with him—in spite of, or perhaps because of, his prosaic attitudes and failings.
Lewis makes use of numerous devices of satire in his construction of this small-town physician who is forever puzzled at his wife's reaction to his beloved Gopher Prairie. This love for the prairie town is made clear at the first encounter between Carol and Kennicott. Meeting at a Sunday evening supper in the St. Paul home of mutual friends, the two quickly reveal their opposing views: Carol loves the metropolis; Kennicott hates the anonymity of the "big city of two-three hundred thousand" where he is "just one flea on the dog's back."\(^{11}\) Gopher Prairie, on the other hand, is a

...darn pretty town. Lots of fine maples and boxelders, and there's two of the dandiest lakes you ever saw, right near town! And we've got seven miles of cement walks already, and building more every day! Course a lot of these towns still put up with plank walks, but not for us, you bet!\(^{12}\)

In this first long speech, Kennicott is revealed as a provincial—in part by the language he employs. The use of colloquialisms in characterization is an effective device of the satirist. The man who feels he is a "flea on the dog's back" and sprinkles his speech with expressions like "dandiest lakes," "a lot of," "put up with," and "you bet" quickly becomes, for the reader, an at least slightly comical character.

Throughout the book, Kennicott speaks in much the same way. The towns along the railroad line from the Twin Cities

\(^{11}\)Sinclair Lewis, Main Street (New York, 1920), p. 13. Hereafter cited as Lewis, Main Street.

\(^{12}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 14.
to Gopher Prairie are "good hustling burgs,"\textsuperscript{13} even though they "aren't comfy like Gopher Prairie."\textsuperscript{14} The stiffly proper home of Sam Clark has a "dandy interior, eh?"\textsuperscript{15} Will promises Carol a trip to buy some "new glad-rags";\textsuperscript{16} hunting, he says, makes "you relish your victuals."\textsuperscript{17} Even in the emotional crises of his life, Kennicott is consistently colloquial. When he inadvertently finds Erik Valborg and Carol walking along a dark, wet country road, he takes Carol home and faces her calmly:

\begin{quote}
Well, Carrie, you better...cut it out now. I'm not going to do the outraged husband stunt. I like you and I respect you, and I'd probably look like a boob if I tried to be dramatic. ...I hope you don't suppose this husky young Swede farmer is as innocent and Platonic and all that stuff as you are! Wait now, don't get sore! I'm not knocking him. He isn't a bad sort. And he's young and likes to gas about books. Course you like him. That isn't the real rub.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

An author with less sureness and skill than Lewis might easily have destroyed the beautifully consistent characterization by polishing the language, at least in this one highly dramatic scene. However, such expressions as "boob" and "like to gas about books" have become so much a part of the reader's

\textsuperscript{13} Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{14} Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{15} Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{16} Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 353.
\textsuperscript{17} Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 394.
\textsuperscript{18} Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 395.
conception of the doctor that they do not seem incongruous even in a basically noble speech.

Another contrivance by which the satirist employs speech to delineate character involves the use of grossly direct phrases and crude expressions. Angry because he believes Vida Sherwin, the town's spinster schoolteacher, has told Carol that all small-town doctors hate each other, Kennicott calls Vida "a brainy woman, but she'd be a damn sight brainier if she kept her mouth shut and didn't let so much of her brains ooze out that way." Shocking to Carol—and to most readers—such a statement becomes a memorable element in the characterization of the doctor. Similar is his analysis of Erik:

Oh, I don't want to be unjust to him. I believe he took his physical examination for military service. Got varicose veins—not bad, but enough to disqualify him. Though I will say he doesn't look like a fellow that would be so awful darn crazy to poke his bayonet into a Hun's guts.

Language is used again and again to satirize Kennicott—to help create the memorably crude but strong doctor. There are mispronunciations: Taormina to him is "Tormina, whatever that is--some nice expensive millionaire colony, I suppose"; Goethe is "Gertie"; a chemise is "a shimmy."

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19 Lewis, Main Street, p. 167.
20 Lewis, Main Street, p. 333.
21 Lewis, Main Street, p. 169.
22 Lewis, Main Street, p. 171.
23 Lewis, Main Street, p. 199.
Another element in the characterization of Kennicott is his attitude toward his profession. When he and Carol first meet, she, characteristically romantic, expects him to feel that medicine is "such an opportunity for sympathy."\footnote{Lewis, Main Street, p. 14.} Kennicott, though, says he likes it because it keeps him outside and still gives him "a chance to loaf in the office for a change."\footnote{Lewis, Main Street, p. 14.} Instead of sympathy, he says, what most of his patients need is "a bath and a good dose of salts."\footnote{Lewis, Main Street, p. 14.} Not "one of these old salts-and-quinine peddlers," he still finds himself "in a rut of obstetrics and typhoid and busted legs."\footnote{Lewis, Main Street, p. 14.}

Raymie Wutherspoon, too, has an idealistic view of a doctor's life and exclaims that it must be wonderful to have the trust of the patients. Again, Kennicott bursts the romantic bubble: "Huh. It's me that's got to do the trusting. Be damn sight more wonderful if they'd pay their bills."\footnote{Lewis, Main Street, p. 59.}

Carol (perhaps spurred on by a slick woman's magazine?) at one time decides to show an interest in Will's work. But when she asks for details, he succinctly outlines his day: "... couple chumps with bellyaches, and a sprained wrist, and a fool woman that thinks she wants to kill herself because..."
her husband doesn't like her and-- Just routine work.\textsuperscript{29}

Not to be so easily nonplussed, she later asks him how to remove the tonsils, and he yawns, "Tonsilectomy? Why you just-- If there's pus, you operate. Just take 'em out. Seen the newspaper?\textsuperscript{30}

There is satire in the depiction of Kennicott as being invariably concerned with trivia. The furnace seems to stand uppermost in his mind. When Carol comes in after eleven one night from a visit with Guy Pollock, the town's bachelor lawyer, Kennicott's only complaint is that she forgot to close the lower draft in the furnace before she left. When he and Carol go to Minneapolis, he is impressed with the expensive hotel where they stay because of the thermostats on the radiators and is inspired to remark, "Must take a big furnace to run this place.\textsuperscript{31} Again, when they attend the dramatic school presentation in Minneapolis, his only praise is for the furnace: "One thing I will say for that dump: they had it warm enough. Must have a big hot-air furnace, I guess. Wonder how much coal it takes to run them through the winter?\textsuperscript{32}

In addition to the furnace, there are numerous other minor matters which concern Kennicott--storm windows (time to put them up?), heavy underwear (wear it another week?),

\textsuperscript{29}Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{30}Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{31}Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 212.
\textsuperscript{32}Lewis, \textit{Main Street}, p. 216.
the clock (wound or not?), the door (securely locked?), the grass (too dry?), "water-pipes and goose-hunting and Mrs. Fagero's mastoid." Irritating to Carol, who can nearly always foretell his words and actions, the methodical concern with little things are, for the reader, further elements of the realism of the characterization. Quite satirical—and yet quite real—is this description of a husbandly kiss:

She dropped into his lap and (after he had jerked back his head to save his eye-glasses, and removed the glasses, and settled her in a position less cramping to her legs, and casually cleared his throat) he kissed her amiably... .

Kennicott's tastes are held up to careful and satiric scrutiny. He reads magazines of "saffron detective stories" and assures Carol that he likes poetry "fine—James Whitcomb Riley and some of Longfellow—this 'Hiawatha.' He likes "regular" plays—such as "Lottie of Two-Gun Rancho" and "Cops and Crooks." As far as architecture goes, he wants a house exactly like Sam Clark's, which was exactly like every third new house in every town in the country: a square, yellow stolidity with immaculate clapboards, a broad screened porch, tidy grass-plots, and concrete walks; a house resembling the mind of a merchant who votes the party ticket straight and goes to church once a month and owns a good car.37

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33Lewis, Main Street, p. 140.
34Lewis, Main Street, p. 162.
35Lewis, Main Street, p. 124.
36Lewis, Main Street, p. 120.
37Lewis, Main Street, pp. 297-298.
Food? Porridge is his "symbol of morality"\(^{38}\) and his favorites are steak, roast beef, pig's feet, oatmeal and baked apples; he thinks himself an epicure because he prefers grapefruit to oranges.

Conservative in his tastes, Kennicott is equally so in regard to morality. As he and Carol return from a party, he chides her for talking about "legs and all that immoral stuff."\(^{39}\) Then, when Carol gives a party herself and dresses as Princess Winky Poo, he whispers to her, "Don't cross your legs in that costume. Shows your knees too plain."\(^{40}\) Again he chides Carol for talking about "mistresses or something"\(^{41}\) to Sam Clark--Sam Clark, who would never speak of such subjects "when there's ladies around! You can bet your life on that!"\(^{42}\) All in all, Kennicott is convinced that "the American people don't like filth"\(^{43}\)--at least, Lewis implies, not in mixed company.

Another aspect of the satirical in the development of the character of Will Kennicott lies in the ironic contrast between what he thinks himself and what he really is. He considers himself well-traveled and tells Carol, "Of course

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\(^{38}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 73.
\(^{39}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 53.
\(^{40}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 80.
\(^{41}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 171.
\(^{42}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 172.
\(^{43}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 199.
I may be prejudiced, but I've seen an awful lot of towns—
one time I went to Atlantic City for the American Medical
Association meeting, and I spent practically a week in New
York!"44 He reassures a doubtful Carol about the value of
the Chatauqua thus: "Well, maybe it won't be so awful
darn intellectual, the way you and I might like it, but it's
a whole lot better than nothing."45 This same Kennicott
points out Nat Hicks, the tailor, to his bride at her first
Gopher Prairie party, answering her surprise thus: "Maybe
we're slow, but we are democratic. I go hunting with Nat
same as I do with Jack Elder."46 Asked if he goes hunting
with his barber, too, he replies, "No but-- No use running
this democracy thing into the ground."47

Perhaps the most direct satire aimed at Kennicott
appears in the physical descriptions of him. He sits around
the house "in his honest socks,"48 clumps upstairs at night
"casually scratching his thick woolen undershirt,"49 and in
the bedroom is a "grotesque figure in baggy union-pajamas."50
His clothes are usually wrinkled, his cuffs frayed, and his
shoes scuffed. He shaves only three times a week, and his

44Lewis, Main Street, p. 13.
45Lewis, Main Street, p. 237.
46Lewis, Main Street, p. 42.
47Lewis, Main Street, p. 42.
48Lewis, Main Street, p. 181.
49Lewis, Main Street, p. 98.
50Lewis, Main Street, p. 172.
finger nails, jaggedly cut with a pocket knife, look sharply out of place on his scoured surgeon's hands. A particularly striking description is this:

He slumped down in one chair, his legs up on another, and he explored the recesses of his left ear with the end of his little finger—she could hear the faint smack—he kept it up—he kept it up—\(^{51}\)

One feels sympathy for Kennicott—and perhaps a tinge of kinship. However, Lewis's other major-character doctor, Martin Arrowsmith, is a more admirable character—somewhat cold, perhaps, but genuinely in search of truth. Because of the very nature of this physician-researcher, Lewis uses a more subtle hand in employing satire in the portrayal. It is primarily in two areas that satire is a part of the sketching of Arrowsmith—his attitudes toward "society" and toward medicine.

To begin with, Martin is a small town boy who frequents the office of the often-intoxicated Doc Vickerson. From there he goes to the state university and to medical school, part of the time believing that chemistry and physics and biology are his world, and occasionally declaring that he wants to "learn the doctor trade and make six thousand dollars a year."\(^{52}\) He wants both the isolation of the dedicated scientist and the evidences of wealth and acclaim. Angus Duer, a

\(^{51}\)Lewis, Main Street, p. 290.

fellow medical student, takes him to a concert, and Martin realizes his own complete ignorance of literature, painting, and music. The concert, for him, is "incomprehensible beauty" at first; he thinks:

I'm going to have 'em all--the fame of Max Gottlieb--I mean his ability--and the lovely music and lovely women--Golly! I'm going to do big things. And see the world.....Will this piece never quit?54

His first love affair, with Madeline Fox, is partially the result of his desire for "culture." A graduate English major, Madeline represents things he has never had time for--little suppers, dancing, conversations about literature, tact, social ease. As Lewis says, "There was no strength, no grace, no knowledge, that Martin Arrowsmith did not covet, when consciousness of it had pierced through the layer of his absorption."55 For Madeline, he even dresses up and goes to church. But after he meets Leora, he is annoyed because Madeline is sleek and sophisticated--irritatingly so in comparison with Leora's sloppy provinciality. Leora herself says, "But I am stupid and ordinary and She isn't. ...I simply admire you frightfully (Heaven knows why, but I do), while She has sense enough to make you admire Her and tag after Her."56

55Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 46.
56Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 73.
Martin's new-found love for Leora thus seemingly is free of social desires, but this simplicity does not last long. He takes Leora to the Digamma Pi dance; he "achingly"\(^{57}\) desires men to admire her and dance with her but is too proud to introduce her to his friends, lest he seem to be begging them to dance with her. Then, when she does begin to dance, he writhes with jealousy.

Invited to attend the theater, Martin worries, rationalizes, and thinks, "Me personally, I don't care two hoots for all this trotting around—Though of course it isn't so bad to see pretty women in fine clothes, and be dressed as good as anybody—Oh, I don't know!"\(^{58}\)

After he and Leora are married, their infrequent quarrels result from Martin's unsettled attitude about social position. He criticizes her clothes, her conversation, her casualness. On one occasion, they dine at the Pickerbaugh home and, returning home, Leora says, "And you so superior about the doctor's poetry and my saying 'cute'! You're just as much a backwoods hick as I am and maybe more so!"\(^{59}\) Later, walking alone and thinking, Martin dwells on this remark; he is, after all, a Bachelor of Arts who reads "Henry James and everybody."\(^{60}\) Yet he says things like "Pull the bunk"! He decides,

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\(^{57}\) Lewis, *Arrowsmith*, p. 75.
\(^{58}\) Lewis, *Arrowsmith*, p. 81.
\(^{60}\) Lewis, *Arrowsmith*, p. 216.
Hell! I'll use any kind of phrase I want to!
I'm not one of your social climbers like Angus.
...but there must be quite a few of these rich
men here that know about nice houses. Clothes.
Theaters. That stuff.61

Making his initial tour of the McGurk Institute, Martin
tries to be sophisticated but appreciative. Lewis records it
thus:

"Jove, they do give you the stuff to work
with!" gloated Martin. (He really did, under
Holabird's handsome influence, say Jove, not
Gosh.)62

At a McGurk dinner, he notes unhappily that his dinner partner
has one more fork than he and wonders where he got lost. His
preparations for his trip to St. Hubert, a British possession
(and all Britishers carry canes), include the buying of a cane
"which the shop-keeper guaranteed to be as good as genuine
malacca."63

After Leora's death, Martin becomes involved with the
wealthy young widow, Joyce Lanyon. He visits her country
home on a week-end and feels ill at ease: he hates the valet
who squeezes toothpaste out on his brush and hides his clothes;
he lies "oh, yes," to people who ask if he knows "dear old
R. G."64 However, he goes back to work with dreams of a club,
golf games, and dear old R. G. Although he is "Winnemac and

61 Lewis, Arrowsmith, pp. 216-217.
62 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 294.
63 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 368.
64 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 423.
nothing at all" instead of "Groton and Harvard," he marries Joyce and becomes accustomed to being chauffeured to the Institute and to never worrying about money. He cannot, however, destroy his love for research, and eventually he gives up his comfortable life with Joyce to work with Dr. Terry Wickett at a primitive backwoods camp.

Thus throughout the book Arrowsmith teeters between these contradictory passions: the desire to be "lewd and soft-collared and easy" and his sensitivity to "warm colors and fine gestures."

The second paradoxical element in the make-up of Martin Arrowsmith is his attitude toward medicine. The dual nature of this attitude comes to light when Martin is a fourteen-year-old boy in Elk Mills, Winnemac, acting as the unofficial and unpaid assistant to Doc Vickerson. Lewis writes:

> It is not certain that, in attaching himself to Doc Vickerson, Martin was entirely and edifyingly controlled by a desire to become a Great Healer. He did awe his Gang by bandaging stone-bruises, dissecting squirrels, and explaining the astounding and secret matters to be discovered at the back of the physiology, but he was not completely free from an ambition to command such glory among them as was enjoyed by the son of the Episcopalian minister, who could smoke an entire cigar without becoming sick.
Later, in medical school, Arrowsmith annoys the rest of the Digamma Pi members with his criticisms of the medical profession as a whole. Finally, Angus Duer demands, "Look here, old son. We're all sick of your crabbing. If you think medicine is rot, the way we study it, and if you're so confoundedly honest, why don't you get out?" And soon Arrowsmith does leave the fraternity of future doctors in whose faces he sees "Prescriptions, glossy white sterilizers, smart enclosed motors, and glass office-signs in the best gilt lettering." His is to be the lonely life, spent in a noble and difficult search for truth. This, however, is the same Arrowsmith who shortly is proclaiming to Bert Tozer, Leora's banker brother, that all doctors are benevolent, knowledgeable, and true to their divine calling. This is the Arrowsmith who opens his first tiny office, equipped with a makeshift lab, and says, "But understand, Lee, I'm not going to go monkeying with any scientific research. I'm through with all that."

There in that little office in Leora's hometown he builds up a practice; becomes known as "reliable, skillful, and honest"; and is "rather less distinguished than Alec

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69 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 32.
70 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 33.
71 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 159.
72 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 170.
Ingleblad the barber, less prosperous than Nils Krag the carpenter, and less interesting to his neighbors than the Finnish garageman. 73

Moving on from Wheatsylvania, Martin goes to Nautilus as assistant to the Director of Public Health, filled with a dream of ending all disease, and comes to realize that he is apparently destined "to do things conscientiously and all wrong." 74 After that, it is Chicago and the Rouncefield Clinic; on the train to Chicago he thinks,

I never want to see a laboratory or a public health office again. I'm done with everything but making money....I expect to be a commercial-group doctor the rest of my life. I hope I have the sense to be! ...All right, if what people want is a little healing and a lot of tapestry, they shall have it--and pay for it. 75

And after Chicago come New York and the McGurk Institute, St. Hubert and the plague, and New York again--with Arrowsmith never satisfied, always swinging from one view to the other and yet always earnestly searching for the answer, his personal answer, which he eventually seems to find in Terry Wickett's backwoods lab.

These, then, are Lewis's most carefully drawn doctors--Kennicott, the sometimes laughable and sometimes noble small town practitioner, and Arrowsmith, the scientist in search of

73 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 170.
74 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 266.
75 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 280.
truth. Among his other characters, however, are several memorable but minor physicians, whom, depending on the reader reaction he desires, Lewis treats more or less satirically.

Arrowsmith is peopled largely with doctors—those with whom Martin Arrowsmith comes in contact during his career. One of these is Angus Duer, who, even in medical school, "never squandered an hour or a good impulse." He is forever the practical: medicine to him is money and power, and he concentrates completely on achieving his goal, using people and knowledge as means to an end. Biology and chemistry are courses to be passed, not gates to wondering and experimenting. Professor Gottlieb is

an old laboratory plug; he hasn't got any imagination; he sticks here (medical school) instead of getting out into the world and enjoying the fight. But he certainly is handy. Awfully good technique. He might have been a first-rate surgeon, and made fifty thousand dollars a year. As it is, I don't suppose he gets a cent over four thousand!"

Considered in the light of both Martin's attitudes toward learning and toward Gottlieb, who is presented as a thoroughly devoted and completely sincere scientist, such a speech surely is a satirical revelation of the superficiality of Duer.

Further evidence of this shallowness is given. Duer gives "an appearance of knowing all about plays without having

76 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 18.
77 Lewis, Arrowsmith, pp. 37-38.
seen more than half a dozen in his life."78 He wonders how an intelligent man--Martin, for example--could "make a comrade of a girl who could not bring him social advancement."79 Angus Duer is the poor boy determined to rise above and forget his past--to let nothing get in his way--and a reminder of that past arouses him to fury. When he and Martin are stopped by a night watchman when Martin climbs out of the hospital window after telling Leora good night, Duer says, "Oh, come on! Let's get out of this. Why do you dirty your hands on scum like him?"80 The angry watchman slaps Duer, who flies into a murderous rage and tries to cut the watchman's throat, gasping, "He dared to touch me!"81 Martin drags him away and takes him to an all-night diner where the shaken young man can drown his rage in bootleg whiskey. But the next day this same Duer, unruffled and clear-eyed, can snap at his rescuer, "You were frightfully stewed last night, Arrowsmith. If you can't handle your liquor better than that, you better cut it out entirely."82 The irony of this incident contributes to the reader's conception of Duer as a basically unstable youth seeking stability in self-deception.

78Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 81.
79Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 82.
80Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 84.
81Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 84.
82Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 85.
With such a determination to succeed, Angus quite expectedly does succeed. A few years after graduation, Angus is well established in the Rouncefield Clinic. He is married to a wealthy and beautiful woman, ambitious and "untroubled by the possession of a heart or a brain." And Duer himself? Lewis describes him thus:

Angus had a swim or a fencing lesson daily; he swam easily and fenced like a still-faced demon. He was in bed before eleven-thirty; he never took more than one drink a day; and he never read anything or said anything which would not contribute to his progress as a Brilliant Young Surgeon. His underlings knew that Dr. Duer would not fail to arrive precisely on time, precisely well dressed, absolutely sober, very cool, and appallingly unpleasant to any nurse who made a mistake or looked for a smile.

Particularly noteworthy is the emphasis on the phrase "Brilliant Young Surgeon," with supporting details suggesting the machine-like perfection of the image Duer has become. Also interesting is the contrast in the linked reasons for his displeasure—making a mistake, evidence of human weakness; and looking for a smile, evidence of human emotion.

Another of Arrowsmith's medical school acquaintances is Irving Watters, the psychologist's perfect choice for the "perfectly normal man." Even as a medical student he is "always and carefully dull; smilingly, easily, dependably

83 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 284.
84 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 281.
85 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 19.
The cliche he does not use is the cliche he has not yet heard. And he believes in "morality--except on Saturday evenings... the Episcopal Church--but not the High Church... the Constitution, Darwinism, systematic exercise in the gymnasium, and the genius of the president of the university." This last quotation is an example of one of Lewis's favorite satirical devices--the lumping together of objects or attitudes which normally are considered in completely different levels of thought. The incongruity of such juxtaposition adds to the absurdness of the character who entertains such thoughts.

Watters has a formula for success as a doctor: an office close to transportation lines and on a northeast corner, and a telephone number that is easy to remember. Apparently the formula works. When Martin sees him next, three years after graduation, Watters has become "didactic and incredibly married," has "put on weight and infallibility," and has "learned many new things about which to be dull." As briefly sketched by Lewis, Watters is a vivid parody of the conservative member of the medical profession.

Dr. Almus Pickerbaugh, Director of the Department of Public Health in Nautilus, is something more than a parody; he is a burlesque. Nothing he does is merely average. He

never talks, but either bubbles or orates. He does not father the average two or three or four children, but eight, all girls and all named for flowers: Orchid, Verbena, Daisy, Jonquil, Hibisca, Narcissa, Arbuta, and Gladiola. He wants to be not just Dr. Pickerbaugh, but the Roosevelt and the Longfellow and the Kipling and the Billy Sunday of public health.

In his attempts at "selling the idea of Better Health," Pickerbaugh utilizes any means he thinks might "wake the people out of their sloth." He puts up placards adorned with his own verse, such as this:

Boil the milk bottles or by gum
You better buy your ticket to Kingdom Come.

Along with his poetry, he provides statistics: in divorce cases in Ontario, Tennessee, and southern Wyoming in 1912, 53 per cent of the husbands drank at least one glass of whiskey daily; in Pickens County, Mississippi, 29 persons died from yaws last year alone; and 93 per cent of insanity is caused by booze. Too, he publishes a semi-annual magazine in which he recommends "good health, good roads, good business, and the single standard of morality" (that incongruity of

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89 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 203.
90 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 203.
91 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 204.
92 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 205.
juxtaposition again.) He proclaims Weeks: Better Babies Week, Banish the Booze Week, Tougher Teeth Week, Stop the Spitter Week, and Swat the Fly Week. He even publishes scientific papers in the Midwest Medical Quarterly, of which he is one of the fourteen editors:

He had discovered the germ of epilepsy and the germ of cancer—two entirely different germs of cancer. Usually it took him a fortnight to make the discovery, write the report, and have it accepted.93

And, in addition to his professional work, he has time to organize Iowa's first Rotary Club, to serve as superintendent of the Jonathan Edwards Congregational Sunday School of Nautilus, and to preside over the Moccasin Ski and Hiking Club, the West Side Bowling Club, and the 1912 Bull Moose and Roosevelt Club.

Arrowsmith, in his devotion to the pure science of Gottlieb, is repulsed by Pickerbaugh's enthusiastic approach, folksy sensationalism, and unchecked statistics. He insists to Leora that the director "certainly knows less about epidemiology than I thought any one man could ever learn, all by himself."94 Martin considers Pickerbaugh's scientific knowledge "rather thinner than that of the visiting nurses,"95 but even more distasteful to him is his superior's willingness

93 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 269.
94 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 215.
95 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 219.
to compromise for the sake of the dollar. Pickerbaugh refuses to require pasteurization of milk or to burn down disease-breeding tenements; he does not want to antagonize the dairymen and the landlords. He tells parents that they can save money by taking children to doctors for regular check-ups, and then tells doctors that "public health agitation" \(^{96}\) will merely popularize the custom of going to the doctor regularly. This same excess of compromise characterizes Pickerbaugh's campaigning for Congress: he is against U.S. involvement in the war, but he is for using every possible means to end the terrible calamity; he is for high tariff, but it must be adjusted so that his constituents can buy everything cheaply; he is for high wages for all working men, but he is solidly for protecting the prosperity of every manufacturer, merchant, and landlord.

Opposed by "a stuffy little lawyer whose strength lay in his training" \(^{97}\) as state senator, lieutenant governor, and county judge, Pickerbaugh, "the two-fisted fighting poet doc," \(^{98}\) wins by a two-to-one margin and goes to Congress.

On St. Hubert Island, Arrowsmith meets three doctors. One is Inshotape Jones, the island's surgeon general. Lewis describes him as "a tall, thin, fretful, youngish man, without

\(^{96}\) Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 237.

\(^{97}\) Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 262.

\(^{98}\) Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 262.
bowed,"99 who wants to go back to "that particular part of
Home represented by tennis-tees in Surrey."100 He is sure
that the plague could not exist in St. Hubert, because there
never had been plague there. After the plague takes over the
island, he works courageously twenty hours a day and goes to
pieces; he flees the island and, when he comes to his senses,
kills himself rather than go back and face the stigma of
desertion.

Another doctor Arrowsmith meets on the island is Stokes,
a parish medical officer who "had beaten Incheape Jones at
tennis with a nasty, unsporting serve—the sort of serve you'd
expect from an American."101 A bounder and a bore, Stokes
retorts to Jones's denial of the possibility of plague that
"perhaps it couldn't be plague, but it damn' well was plague."102
And during the fight against plague, he gets only three hours
of sleep a night but never fails to take his usual fifteen
minutes of exercise when he wakes.

The third island doctor is Oliver Marchand, Negro.
When he and Arrowsmith first talk, the white doctor is per-
plexed by Marchand's obvious intelligence; when they part,
Arrowsmith cries, "I never thought a Negro doctor--I wish people

99 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 354.
100 Lewis, Arrowsmith, pp. 354-355.
101 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 356.
102 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 356.
wouldn't keep showing me how much I don't know!" Sondelius, Martin's assistant, brings Marchand in on meetings of the island's Special Board, "not on the ground that he was the most intelligent person on the island (which happened to be Sondelius's reason) but because he 'represented the plantation hands.' 

Without saying so directly, Lewis tells the reader that each of these three islands doctors is more than an individual; each man personifies a problem. Jones refuses to face reality; he ignores it or denies its existence or runs away from it—even to the final extreme of suicide. Stokes sees nothing but reality and refuses to soften its harshness with tact. And Marchand, who possesses courage, intelligence, and social grace, has to have his presence justified to those less brave, less intelligent, and less tactful, simply because of his color.

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103 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 383.
104 Lewis, Arrowsmith, pp. 389-390.
CHAPTER III

CLERGYMEN

Another group of interesting Lewis characters is his clergymen. Most of these ministers are presented in an uncomplimentary light, although a few are genuinely admirable men. During a part of his youth, Lewis planned to be a minister himself, but he rejected this idea while he was in college. Nevertheless, he remained interested in religion, although in a generally negative fashion. And, though Lewis has been accused of not being fair to the clergy in his typically exaggerated treatments, his characterizations contain enough reality to be most troubling to the thoughtful devout.

Each of the novels considered in this thesis has one or more clergymen appearing in either major or minor roles. In Main Street, the Reverend Edmund Zitterel pastors the Baptist Church of Gopher Prairie. His announced sermon topic for an August Sunday is "America, Face Your Problems!" and Carol Kennicott is tempted to attend the service. She recognizes the abundance of problems America could be called on to face—"with the great war, workmen in every nation showing a desire to control industries, Russia hinting a leftward revolution against Kerensky, woman suffrage coming."105

105Lewis, Main Street, p. 328.
So Carol and her family go to church. The Reverend Zitterel is pictured as "a thin, swart, intense young man with a bang,"\(^{106}\) wearing a black suit and a lilac tie, who delivers "a prayer informing Almighty God of the news of the past week"\(^{107}\) and then begins his sermon. As it turns out, America's only problems are Mormonism and Prohibition—with the Seventh-Day Adventists and girls in silk stockings fast approaching the category of problems.

Babbitt introduces the reader to the minister of the Chatham Road Presbyterian Church, the Reverend John Jennison Drew, M.A., D.D., LL.D. (the M.A. and the D.D. from Elbert University, Nebraska, and the LL.D. from Waterbury College, Oklahoma). Admittedly "too much the scholar and poet"\(^{108}\) to imitate common evangelists, Dr. Drew delivers sermons that are beautifully balanced, highly alliterative, and sonorously meaningless:

> At this abundant harvest-time of all the year, when, though stormy the sky and laborious the path to the drudging wayfarer, yet the hovering and bodiless spirit swoops back o'er all the labors and desires of the past twelve months, oh, then it seems to me there sound behind all our apparent failures the golden chorus of greeting from those passed happily on; and lo! on the dim horizon we see behind dolorous clouds the mighty mass of mountains—mountains of melody, mountains of mirth, mountains of might!\(^{109}\)

\(^{106}\) Lewis, Main Street, p. 327.

\(^{107}\) Lewis, Main Street, p. 329.


\(^{109}\) Lewis, Babbitt, p. 206.
But in addition to being a "renowned word painter" and a "wizard soul-winner," Dr. Drew is a business man. He knows the value of advertising; in fact, a local reporter tells Babbitt,

There's just one better publicity-grabber in town, and that's this Dora Gibson Tucker that runs the Child Welfare and the Americanization League, and the only reason she's got Drew beaten is because she has got some brains.

Dr. Drew, the business man, writes editorials on "The Dollars and Sense Value of Christianity," equips his church with "everything but a bar" in order to attract members, and manages to extract large contributions almost painlessly. Even when he kneels in his study with a repentant Babbitt, he keeps his eye on his watch; there's just five minutes for prayer before time for important meetings with the Don't Make Prohibition a Joke Association and the Anti-Birth-Control Union.

Arrowsmith is concerned chiefly with medical men. However, one character who attends medical school with Martin Arrowsmith is more a minister than a doctor. The Reverend Ira Hinkley, a graduate of Pottsburgh Christian College and of the Sanctification Bible and Missions School, plans to be a medical missionary. A former football player, Hinkley is

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110 Lewis, Babbitt, p. 221.
111 Lewis, Babbitt, p. 221.
112 Lewis, Babbitt, p. 205.
ever an optimist and often an annoyance. Martin says to him on one occasion:

_Honestly, Hinkley, of all the Christians I ever met you take the rottenest advantages. You can lick anybody in the class, and when I think of how you're going to bully the poor heathen when you get to be a missionary, and make the kids put on breeches, and marry off all the happy lovers to the wrong people, I could bawl._

The Digamma Pi fraternity elects Hinkley to membership in an effort to improve the group's reputation; as Lewis puts it,

...no company which included the Reverend Mr. Hinkley could possibly be taken by the Dean as immoral, which was an advantage if they were to continue comfortably immoral.

Within the fraternity, Hinkley is a constant corrector; he tries to stop the members' profanity and provides them with statistics about the values of clean living. This attitude of reproval carries over into his missionary work on the island of St. Hubert. When Arrowsmith and his helpers go to the island, they find Hinkley working among the natives there, as head of the Sanctification Brotherhood, and there the doctor-missionary dies of the plague.

Undoubtedly Lewis's best-known clergyman is Elmer Gantry, whom Rebecca West calls "this snorting, cringing creature, this offspring of the hippopotamus and the skunk."115

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113 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 18.
114 Lewis, Arrowsmith, p. 17.
Gantry is everything the traditional prototype of the minister is not—sensual, evil, hypocritical—and Lewis practices no restraint in developing this portrait. Every weakness, every sin, every crudity is vividly revealed, and there are so many such revelations that the character becomes a caricature. He is not one minister, but the bad qualities of thousands of ministers encased in one thick skin. There is nothing of the kindliness of the satirical treatment of Will Kennicott in Lewis's presentation of Gantry; now the satire becomes pure invective.

The reader's first encounter with Elmer Gantry—"eloquently drunk, lovingly and pugnaciously drunk,"116 singing with Jim Lefferts in the "most gilded and urban saloon in Cato, Missouri"117--discloses a major facet of the future preacher's character, his intense satisfaction with himself. He finds two glasses before him, tastes one, and finds it to be the chaser, the water.

But they couldn't fool him! The whiskey would certainly be in that other lil sawed-off glass. And it was. He was right, as always. With a smirk of self-admiration he sucked in the raw Bourbon.118

This same smugness marks his entire personality:

...he was always friendly enough; he was merely astonished when he found that you did

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117Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 5.

118Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 6.
not understand his importance and did not want to hand over anything he might desire.  

A result of this self-satisfaction is Gantry's marvelous ability to justify his actions, to put himself in the right, whatever happens. During his first pastorate he goes to incredible lengths to seduce Lulu Bains, the daughter of a deacon. He plans, pleads, placates; he "just happens" to take a cold three-hour walk that finds him at the Bains's home at eight in the evening, really too late to walk back to town. Invited to spend the night, he talks Lulu into sneaking down to the parlor to him after her parents are in bed. Later, when he is alone again, he complains:

Hell, I oughtn't to have gone so far!  
I thought she'd resist more. Aaah!  
It wasn't worth all this risk. Aaahh!  
She's dumm as a cow. ...Her fault, really, but-- Aaah! I was a fool! Well, fellow has to stand right up and face his faults honestly. I do. I don't excuse myself. I'm not afraid to admit my faults and repent.  

And he goes to bed "admiring his own virtue and almost forgiving her."  

When the novelty wears off, Elmer is bored with Lulu and determines to rid himself of her. Frightened and desperate, she comes to him saying she is pregnant. He quickly

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120 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, pp. 122-123.  
121 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 123.
realizes that she is making up the story and, in righteous anger, he refuses to marry her, crying.

But when a woman, a Christian, deliberately lies and tries to deceive a man in his deepest feelings—That's too much, no matter what I did! Don't you ever speak to me again!122

As the situation develops, however, Mr. Bains plans a shotgun wedding, and Elmer has to devise some stratagem to save himself. He succeeds in tricking Lulu into an embrace with another man and hurriedly supplies as witness Mr. Bains, who, begging "Try to forgive us, Brother,"123 lets Elmer go.

Time after time Elmer is wrong and makes himself appear right—or righteous. His crude wit is instrumental in causing the forced retirement of Dr. Bruno Zechlin, the Greek professor he despised because of a failing grade. The dislike is purely personal, and yet Elmer tells the dean of the school that he considers it "a shame when a man on the faculty is trying to take away our faith by hints and sneers, that's how I feel."124 For reasons just as personal, Elmer wants to get the suspicious Frank Shallard away from him and Lulu Bains; to accomplish this end, he plays on Frank's doubts, convincing Shallard that he is unfit to be a minister and graciously permitting him to resign before he should start

122Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 140.
123Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 149.
124Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 133.
some "poor young lady on the doubt-paved road that leads to everlasting Hell!"\textsuperscript{125}

Above all else a hypocrite, Gantry is most adept at masking his real actions and motives before the public, often so cleverly that he almost fools himself. When surprised while reading "an illustrated pink periodical devoted to prize fighters and chorus girls,"\textsuperscript{126} he fervently declares that he was "thinking of denouncing it next Sunday."\textsuperscript{127} Approached in Paris by a greasy little man with pornographic cards, he gloats over them until his wife comes up; then he roars at the man, "You get out of here or I'll call a cop! Trying to sell obscene pictures—and to a minister of the gospel! Cleo, these Europeans have dirty minds.\textsuperscript{128}

Another integral part of the man who is Elmer Gantry is his incredible obtuseness. In college, he never realizes that he is unpopular; the men who seem chilly, he reasons, are merely envious. After he succeeds in causing Dr. Zechlin's dismissal from the college, he receives, from an anonymous donor, thirty dimes wrapped in a tract about holiness—and never knows why. However, Lewis says, "he found the sentiments

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125} Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 134.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 143.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 143.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 422.
\end{itemize}
in the tract useful in a sermon, and the thirty dimes he spent for lively photographs of burlesque ladies."\textsuperscript{129}

Dedication to the ministry as a high calling just is not part of Gantry’s make-up. (His Call itself comes primarily from a quart of corn whiskey Jim Lefferts shares with him.)

His first real thoughts about becoming a preacher come to him as the result of the emotional response of a crowd to whom he testifies at a college evangelistic meeting:

Yes, sir! The whole crowd! Turned to me like I was an All-American preacher!

Wouldn’t be so bad to be a preacher if you had a big church and— Lot easier than digging out law-cases and having to put it over a jury and another lawyer maybe smarter’n you are.

The crowd have to swallow what you tell ’em in a pulpit, and no back-talk or cross-examination allowed!\textsuperscript{130}

After such an experience he throws himself into the task of training. He learns eighteen synonyms for sin; he wins a cash prize for his paper on sixteen ways to pay a church debt; he declares, "Of course praying and all that is all O. K., but you got to be practical!"\textsuperscript{131} And practical he is. Working with Sharon Falconer, he discovers the real purpose of singing: "to lead the audience to a state of

\textsuperscript{129}Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{130}Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{131}Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 90.
mind where they would do as they were told"; and writes the first religious yell in history:

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\text{Hallelujah, praise God, hal, hal, hal!}
\]
\[
\text{Hallelujah, praise God, hal, hal, hal!}
\]
\[
\text{All together, I feel better,}
\]
\[
\text{Hal, hal, hal,}
\]
\[
\text{For salvation of the nation—}
\]
\[
\text{Aaaaaaaaaaaa—men!}
\]

Such shenanigans, however, are only the beginning. It is Elmer who convinces Sharon of the profits available in healing and decorates the altar with an inspiring exhibit of discarded (or purchased) crutches and walking canes.

After Sharon's death, Elmer drifts aimlessly until he sees the practicality of becoming a Methodist:

Get in with a real big machine like the Methodists—maybe have to start low down, but climb fast—be a bishop myself in ten years—with all their spondulix and big churches and big membership and everything to back me up. Me for it.

Later he sees the practicality of supporting a Jewish candidate for mayor of Sparta:

All the swells are going to support this guy McGarry, but darned if I don't think the Yid'll win, and anybody that roots for him'll stand ace-high after the election.

After some hesitation, he likewise sees the practicality of accepting an old church in a run-down section of Zenith. At first glance, he feels no inclination to "run a soup-kitchen

\[^{132}\text{Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 208.}\]
\[^{133}\text{Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 209.}\]
\[^{134}\text{Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 262.}\]
\[^{135}\text{Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 319.}\]
and tell a bunch of dirty bums to come to Jesus," but, seeing promise of a boom in the area, he reconsiders: "Mustn't jump too quick. Besides, these folks need the gospel just as much as the swell-headed plutes out on Royal Ridge." Sermons, too, furnish Lewis with a subject for satire. Gantry's earliest formula is this:

I just give 'em a good helpful sermon, with some jokes sprinkled in to make it interesting and some stuff about the theater or something that'll startle 'em a little and wake 'em up and help 'em to lead better and fuller daily lives.

Using this formula, he develops appropriate talks for all occasions: for the Men Only services, a discourse on the joy of complete chastity; or for young people, a "metaphysical lecture, entitled 'Whoa Up, Youth!'" His prize, though, is his sermon on Love--useful for all occasions. Adapted from Ingersoll, this particular oration never fails to satisfy, to inspire the listeners, whether they are college students at a Y. M. C. A. meeting, small town church pillars, or curious visitors to Sharon Falconer's tent meetings. His notes, "right out of his own head," are superb:

Love:
a rainbow

136 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 322.
137 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 322.
138 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 93.
139 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 378.
140 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 151.
AM & PM star
from cradle to tomb
Inspires art etc. music voice of love
slam atheists etc. who do not appreciate love\textsuperscript{141}

Ingersoll is not the only source of inspiration and idea for Gantry. Browning furnishes him with numerous additions for his notebook of polysyllables and phrases, handy for dressing up sermons. Dickens, Longfellow, Whittier, and Ella Wheeler Wilcox are equally valuable, but not Kipling. Reading Kipling is too enjoyable to be worthwhile, Gantry is sure.

Along with his reading, Gantry becomes interested in writing. The newspapers of the towns in which he serves as minister immortalize his offerings. The \textit{Banjo Valley Pioneer} carries this advertisement:

\textbf{WAKE UP, MR. DEVIL!}

\textbf{If Old Satan were as lazy as some would-be Christians in this burg, we'd all be safe. But he isn't!}
Come out next Sunday, 10:30 A. M.
and hear a red-blooded sermon by Rev. Gantry on

\textbf{WOULD JESUS PLAY POKER?}
M. E. Church\textsuperscript{142}

The \textit{Sparta World-Chronicle} presents this headline, "Would You Like Your Mother To Go Bathing Without Stockings?" and this couplet, "Follow the crowd to the beautiful times/ At the beautiful church with the beautiful chimes."\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{141}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{142}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 307.
\textsuperscript{143}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 318.
Repeatedly Lewis puts Gantry in a situation that reveals him as a hypocrite, an opportunist, and a fame-seeker. Perhaps the most concise characterization of the man, however, is not a situation at all, but merely a description of his possessions. At Banjo Center, Gantry unpacks excellent outer clothing—patent leather shoes, top hat, and all—and two ragged suits of underclothes; black silk socks, with holes in the toes; silk handkerchiefs for his breast pocket and torn cotton rags for his nose; a dollar alarm clock carried on a gold and platinum chain. This seems a quite effective comment on a man whose primary concern is for the externals of life—the man who never says anything important but says it sonorously, and who is actually proud of his Doctor of Divinity degree, awarded by a grateful college in return for financial favors. This is the man—boozzer, adulterer, liar, fake—who declares fervently to his congregation: "We shall yet make these United States a moral nation!"\textsuperscript{144}

\textit{Elmer Gantry} also contains several other sketches of minister types. Judson Roberts, "Old Jud" to college men throughout Kansas, had been a star athlete in his own college days, when he was known as the Praying Fullback. His appeal is based upon his manliness, his physical prowess; he is "big as a grizzly, jolly as a spaniel pup, radiant as ten suns."\textsuperscript{145} He advises young, unmarried men, in answer to their

\textsuperscript{144}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 447.

\textsuperscript{145}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 43.
awkward questions about a secret practice, to "get a lot of exercise. Get out and run like hell! And then cold baths. Darn' cold."\textsuperscript{146} He tells jokes. He uses slang. He attempts to prove to Elmer that all Christians are not "poor little sniveling gospel-mongers"\textsuperscript{147} by stripping off his coat and offering to fight Elmer "for the glory of God."\textsuperscript{148} He proclaims to young men the glories of playing "on Christ's team."\textsuperscript{149} And then Judson Roberts travels on to the next town, wishing he had a good job selling real estate.

Dr. Otto Miekenlooper is an institutionalist, an organizer. His church has manual training, gymnastics, classes in painting and French and sex hygiene, clubs for railroad men and stenographers and bell-boys, and Sunday evening lectures on the folly of war and the need for clean milk. Yet, one of Miekenlooper's fellow ministers says to him:

You talk about socialism and pacifism, and say a lot of nice things about 'em, but you always explain that reforms must come in due time, which means never, and then only through the kind supervision of Rockefeller and Henry Ford.\textsuperscript{150}

Dr. Mahlon Potts is the "stage parson,"\textsuperscript{151} fat, pompous, safe, respectable, and booming with flowery speech. In

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{146}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 42.
\item \textsuperscript{147}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 45.
\item \textsuperscript{148}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 45.
\item \textsuperscript{149}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 54.
\item \textsuperscript{150}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 339.
\item \textsuperscript{151}Lewis, \textit{Elmer Gantry}, p. 338.
\end{enumerate}
contrast, Dr. Philip McGarry is the en\ant terrible of the church—heretical, critical, and "even at a funeral incapable of breathing 'Ah, sister!'"152

Dr. Evan Brewster, of Kingsblood Royal, is a Baptist minister—and a Negro. Perhaps representative of Neil Kingblood's mixed feelings about the Negro race, Dr. Brewster is seen first as

a large man, black as a jappanned deed-box, with the shoulders of a roustabout and just the kinks of hair, the pushed-in nose, bulbous mouth, sloping forehead, thin legs that Neil had seen in every picture of a black dock-walloper, every primeval brute who regularly assaults fatherly white policemen,153

but wearing "the canonical primness of a Geneva gown."154

Neil, expecting the stereotyped Negro sermon filled with "brethrens" and "sisters," is disappointed when he first hears Dr. Brewster preach; the sermon is too stately, too cultured, too "generally white."155 And Dr. Brewster's greeting to him at the door of the church at the close of the service is just the same as that of every white minister Neil had known. Despite the unexpected sameness in message and delivery, Neil sees Dr. Brewster as one beyond the

152 Lewis, Elmer Gantry, p. 339.
154 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 95.
155 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 95.
commonplace—extraordinarily kind, wise, gentle, powerful—"a saint," Kingsblood says. The people of Dr. Brewster's congregation, however, say that he is too good a bowler and too good a cook to be a saint.

Dr. Brewster, to make ends meet, works nights at the post office:

Out of pulpit clothes, in a brown jacket, a soft white shirt and an insignificant blue bow-tie, Dr. Brewster was as much the post-office worker as he was the clergyman, and if his grammar persisted in being more accurate than Neil's...and his vocabulary more flexible, he was much jollier. His laughter came from a huge chest, a large mouth, a tolerant heart.

What satire there is in the portrayal of Evan Brewster is generally of the foregoing type—rather gentle and kindly. Quite often it appears in the minister's own words. He laughs at the size of his parsonage, saying that he, his wife, and his two children manage by sleeping on top of the stove and keeping under it the bathtub, the cat, and his library—both books. He laughs at his having to work at the post office, telling his congregation that they are lucky to have a preacher who is a "civil-service employee and not a panhandler."

He tells Neil of walking past the Kingsblood house in Sylvan Park and seeing Neil's wife and daughter in the yard: "I was

156 Lewis, *Kingsblood Royal*, p. 104.
careful not to disturb them. They just saw another darky who probably had a girl in some neighborhood kitchen. 159

The minister of Kingsblood's own church is not treated so sympathetically by Lewis. The Reverend Dr. Shelley Buncer, pastor of the Sylvan Park Baptist Church, was hired, apparently, because of his talents as a "companionable golfer, a skillful executive at weddings and children's birthday-parties, and a dependable extemporaneous speaker at bond-drives." 160 Neil, however, wonders if Dr. Buncer might "actually know things about God and Immortality that were hidden from the common laborer or banker" 161 and goes to him in hope of receiving help in his personal dilemma. With a few small details, Lewis outlines a scathing characterization: a study decorated with portraits of Adoniram Judson and Harry Emerson Fosdick and a print labeled "Kids and Kits," a proffered cigar that is "good within reason," 162 a swiftly hidden copy of Murder Most Foul, and a reaction of dismay that a parishoner would come to him with a question that he could not look up in his fine reference library. And into Dr. Buncer's mouth Lewis puts a speech that seems worth quoting, at least in part:

Now it just happens that I've had a good deal to do with the darkies, Neil, one time and another. In Brown, I roomed right near one, and many's the time, oh, half a dozen times at least, when I've dropped in at his room and tried to act as if he

159 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 187.
160 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 129.
161 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 129.
162 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 130.
were my equal in every way. But those fellows, even the ones that go through the motions of getting a college education, are uneasy with us whites, who’ve inherited our culture and so take it naturally. ...I learned that segregation in the South was instituted not to discriminate against the Negroes, but to protect them, from the evil-minded men of both races, until such time as they grow up mentally and are able to face reality like you and I and other white men do.

Understand me, I don’t condone it as a permanent arrangement. There is no reason under heaven why American citizens should be compelled to travel in Jimcrow cars and have to eat separately, provided they are American citizens in the fullest sense of the word, and that, I am very much afraid, none of even the more intelligent among our colored friends would even pretend to be. ...Now to come back to your soldier and his problem. Neil has revealed his own problem as if it were that of a soldier friend. ...you might advise him to stay away as much as he can from the white folks because otherwise the cloven hoof of his genetic mutation would be sure to show its hand. With my Southern training, I'm sure I'd spot him at once.  

Dr. Buncer, then, is another of Lewis's traditional ministers who maintain every appearance of wisdom and holiness and yet actually are full of stupidity and bigotry.

Sketched with much less subtle satire is Jat Snood, "probably the nastiest place of goods in Grand Republic." He belongs to the group of "spiritual leaders who in less cultivated days would have been Indian-medicine showmen or itinerant lady milliners" but who today see the chance for financial success in setting up a church, "yelling loud

163Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, pp. 131-132.
164Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 172.
165Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 173.
and mourning low, and taking up three collections at every meeting."166 This particular "latter-day Barnum"167 did not finish high school but is a Doctor of Divinity, self-styled. He knows only fifteen sermons and fifty vaudeville tricks, so five years in one town is his maximum tenure; even the low classes to whom he appeals get tired of him. But for a while he can use polysyllable, slang, and jazz to convince the impoverished masses that, even if they are snubbed by the upper classes, they too can be snobs: they can look down upon all Negroes, Catholics, Jews, and Socialists. His congregations are "the salt of the earth..." when used by dictators, could become the saltpeter of the earth."168

Snood's Grand Republic sanctuary, called "God's Prophecy Tabernacle," is decorated with posters revealing the Soviet premier and the Pope as demons "leering through the flames"169 and diagrams showing that Napoleon, Thomas Paine, and all Rockefellers and Vanderbilts are in hell. Snood himself is characterized as droning, illiterate, and dull, a man who kneels center-stage and, head bowed, (while covertly counting the audience) assures God that if He listens, He will hear many perplexing mysteries solved. Possessed of a magnificent

166Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 173.
167Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 173.
168Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 182.
169Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 182.
voice and "an even more magnificent lack of scruples," he begins thus:

This ain't any sermon that I'm going to give you! It's a plain bellyache! I'm getting good and sick and tired, and God Great Almighty is getting good and sick and tired, of having the gang of Jew Communists that run our Government in Washington hand over our wages and the education of our dear prog-geny to the hellhound agents of Rome and Moscow!171

To Snood, Negroes are "those black and accursed Sons of Baal, whom God turned black for their ancient sins and made into the eternal servants of the white man." And this same minister, after Neil has revealed himself to be a Negro, leads an attack on Kingsblood's home, yelling "Come on, brethren! Get going! It's the work of the Lord! Let's go!"173

170 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 183.
171 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 184.
172 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 185.
173 Lewis, Kingsblood Royal, p. 347.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

And what of all this? What conclusions can be drawn from what has been said? Going back to the earlier discussion of what constitutes satire one recalls three essentials: the critical attitude, attempted persuasiveness, and laughter. It is in these three areas that an attempt to evaluate Lewis's use of satire in portraying physicians and clergymen will be made.

First there is the matter of the writer's recognition of fault or folly in the world around him—a recognition that provokes an attitude of criticism. The faults he sees are the objects of his condemnation. One target of Lewis's criticism is materialism. Few of the characters considered in this paper are free from traces of a materialistic attitude—perhaps only Evan Brewster. Elmer Gantry considers little besides money and position in the direction of his career; practicality is his guide and possessions are his standard for measuring success. Angus Duer sees medicine merely as a means to money and power. Dr. John Jennison Drew prides himself more on being a business man than on being a minister, and Jat Snood's only reason for being in the ministry is the easy money he acquires from taking three collections per service. Even
Martin Arrowsmith is almost lured away from his search for truth by the appeal of Joyce Lanyon's fortune.

A second object of criticism is hypocrisy—phoniness, posing. Elmer Gantry is the epitome of hypocrisy, with his private sins and public morality. Most of the characters discussed, however, are basically like Gantry, the difference being in degree. Jat Snood makes money and builds hatred under the guise of serving God and the poor. Almus Pickerbaugh preaches health measures but refuses to antagonize a dairyman by insisting on pasteurization. Judson Roberts preaches the manly pleasures of "playing on Christ's team" and wishes that he were a real estate salesman.

Another folly upon which Lewis heaps criticism is complacency. Will Kennicott, for example, is perfectly self-satisfied, as evidenced by his assertions that he is well-traveled, intellectual, and democratic—while he really is none of these. Yet he remains in his comfortable rut in oblivious happiness. Elmer Gantry always manages to satisfy himself that he is in the right; his smugness is almost unbelievable in the light of his evilness. Again, Dr. Shelley Buncer, in unqualified complacency, insists that Negroes are naturally uneasy with "us whites, who've inherited our culture."

The spiel that Dr. Buncer gives Neil Kingsblood about the natural inferiority of the Negro points out another vice which Lewis detests—that of prejudice. The treatment of Dr. Oliver Marchand, Negro doctor on St. Hubert's; Jat Snood's hate campaigns against minority groups; the almost pathetic
picture of kindly, brilliant, and downtrodden Evan Brewster—these are all examples of Lewis's railing against prejudice.

Materialism, hypocrisy, complacency, and prejudice are only a few of the objects of Lewis's satire. Is it not a bitter indictment of the world Lewis saw that such qualities should appear in the very professions that should be dedicated to their extinction?

The second major point to be considered is the author's attempts to produce in his readers the same feeling of protest which he himself has experienced. Lewis makes at least occasional use of almost every device of satire to influence the thinking of his public. For example, he frequently employs irony, perhaps the major tool of the satirist: one cannot fail to recognize the cutting irony of Elmer Gantry's repeated protestations of personal innocence in his numerous love affairs; the more gentle irony of Evan Brewster's acceptance of his lowly position; or the poignant irony of the contrast between Gantry, a famous and wealthy clergyman, with a somewhat honorary doctorate, and Brewster, humble and poor, with an earned Ph. D. from Columbia.

Lewis is justly famed for his direct mimicry of the language of the people he depicts. Alfred Kazin says of this:

...in his unflagging absorption of detail and his grasp of the life about him Lewis caught the tone, the speech, of the pervasive American existence; and it was significant that in his sharp attention to American speech—did anyone before ever catch the American "uh"?—he brought
back the comic and affectionate mimicry of the old frontier humor. 174

Involved in this mimicry are such elements as the use of colloquialisms, slang, and obscenity. Various examples have been pointed out in this paper: Kennicott's "hustling burgs" and "glad-rags" and "victuals," Gantry's "hells" and "Yids" and "swell-headed platitudes," Pickerbaugh's noisy orations and folksy platitudes.

Exaggeration is another device which serves Lewis well. One of the demands of satire is that the area of vision be narrowed so that attention is directed to the particular person or vice under scrutiny; an inevitable result of such simplification is the exaggerated size of the remaining objects. Lewis does not often, it seems, try to present a complete picture of a man, a profession, or a society. He chooses, eliminates, emphasizes—all in the hope of creating a vivid portrait, without distractions. If this is his intention and if a basic tenet of criticism is the necessity of judging a work on how well it does what its author set out to do, those critics who denounce Lewis for failure to depict all sides of a situation are unjust. Elmer Gantry, for example, is a composite of all the faults of all the ministers, not a real man. Almus Pickerbaugh represents all the phoniness that Lewis despised (but sometimes exhibited himself). Naturally

such beings are caricatures rather than characters—but the same thing could be said of most satire.

Inseparable from these various devices is the element of merriment or derision. In Lewis's novels there are both chuckles and sneers. The description of an indignant Kennicott stalking around the bedroom in "baggy union-pajamas" is genuinely amusing; so is Pickerbaugh's ridiculous poetry or Reverend Zitterel's analysis of America's pressing problems. Humor of a less comic nature, however, appears in Jat Snood's hate campaign; one may laugh at the picture of "white trash" puffing themselves up by looking down on all minority groups, but in the laughter is a shiver of terror at the thought of the possible tragic results of such hate. Irving Watters's formula for success in medicine would be funny were it not so grimly real. And Elmer Gantry's pledge to "make these United States a moral nation" is humorous—in a repulsive fashion.

Perhaps the best—possibly the only—test of the effectiveness of Lewis's satire is what it has done—and still does to the reader, but a survey of critical articles reveals the conflict of opinion among those who should know his work best. As one source points out, there is still lack of agreement "on whether he was a profound and articulate spokesman against hypocrisy in America or simply an 'angry young man' who insisted on being angry when he was no longer young." 175 Lewis has been criticized as a writer of satire

of "the cheap and showy variety popular on Main Street and in the Zenith Athletic Club." His satire has been called irrational, malicious, artificial, dated, void of perspective. Despite the fact that all of these criticisms are at least partially true, one cannot deny that Lewis was instrumental in shocking much of America into an awareness of its narrowness, its provinciality, its incredible dullness. One cannot deny that Lewis did have "an instinct for what hurts most of us most, bewilders most of us most, threatens most of us most." And one cannot deny that on occasion Lewis succeeds--brilliantly, beautifully--in tearing away the veils of pretense and showing us what we too often are. The brilliance lies in his swift thrusting to the heart of the matter. The beauty lies in his ambivalence, his love in the midst of his hate, his sympathy with the same people he despises. As Lewis Mumford so accurately expressed it, "When he writes well he writes out of the heart, and his satire is effective because his heart has been hurt."


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